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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3272
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY 1858
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 1746
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE 3101
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SIPDIS

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TAGS: ECON ENRG IT KIPR KNNP EPRT

SUBJECT: ITALY'S NEW MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SEEKS
USG HELP WITH TURKEY ON TGI, PLEDGES SUPPORT ON IPR

REF: ROME 461

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Spogli Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Newly appointed Minister of Economic Development Claudio Scajola, who claims almost super-minister status with responsibility for Italy's Trade, Energy, Communications and IPR portfolios, met with Ambassador Spogli on June 26 to discuss mutual concerns about Italy's energy security, a possible visit to Washington in October, and IPR issues. Scajola asked for USG assistance in persuading the Turks to play a more cooperative role in Turkey-Greece-Italy (TGI) pipeline negotiations and noted that a draft law concerning new IPR legislation would be on his desk shortly. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Spogli congratulated newly appointed Minister of Economic Development Claudio Scajola for his public efforts to re-start nuclear energy generation in Italy. Noting that public opposition to the proposal has been minimal, Scajola said that public opinion in Europe is changing and that both Germany and the UK have made public statements indicating a willingness to explore nuclear energy use. The Ambassador encouraged Scajola to visit the United States in October to meet with Energy Secretary Bodman and possibly tour U.S. nuclear energy facilities.

¶3. (C) Expressing concern over Italy's energy security, Scajola pointed to multiple and varied efforts to diversify Italy's energy production, including use of North African natural gas pipelines, building liquefied natural gas re-gasification plants, restarting nuclear energy and expanding renewable sources, all with an aim to reduce Italy's dependence on Russia. Scajola said he spends a majority of his time as Minister dealing with energy issues and claimed that the high cost of oil is responsible for Italy's slow GDP growth. Turning to the TGI pipeline, Scajola reaffirmed Italy's commitment to the pipeline, but said the GOI is worried about Turkish efforts to act as middleman in the gas business. Scajola asked the USG to weigh in with the Government of Turkey to help resolve the dispute and said the GOI would accept transit fees charged by the Turkish government, but not the re-selling of gas.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador raised USG concerns over Italy's status on the special 301 watch list for Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Scajola said a new draft law with tougher administrative penalties for piracy should be on his desk shortly and pledged GOI support for IPR issues in general. It is not clear if the draft law to which Scajola was referring will deal specifically with counterfeiting, or other types of IPR (such as copyright) as well.

15. (C) Comment: Scajola appeared more open to our concerns over Italy's energy security than his predecessor and gives the impression that he is willing to work with us. An early October trip to Washington for Scajola would allow us to highlight our concerns over Italy's lack of energy independence and strengthen cooperation under the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) and other initiatives. It might also be a good opportunity for US firms interested in participating in Italy's re-nuclearization to get a foot in the door with the new GOI. End comment.

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